

critical digest

Vol. III No. 6

October 9, 1950

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

N.Y. Openings This Week

Legend of Sarah-Fulton, 10/11/50. Kermit Bloomgarden's production of comedy by James Gow and Arnaud D'Usseau stars Marsha Hunt, Tom Helmore and Ethel Griffies. Directed by Benn W. Levy...Call Me Madam-Imperial, 10/12/50. Ethel Merman and Paul Lukas in musical by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, music and lyrics by Irving Berlin. Produced by Leland Hayward and directed by George Abbott.

Daily Reviewers Rate the New Shows

Pardon Our French-Broadway, 10/5/50. Olsen and Johnson fans are in a class by themselves. After stating this accepted fact the critics views divided on their latest effort. Eagle, Women's Wear Daily, and Newark News critics praised show as the best of the O & J reviews. They enjoyed pleasant music by Victor Young and the charming sets by Albert Johnson. Atkinson, Times, Pollock, Compass, Hawkins, WT & S, and McClain, Journal American filed "so-so" reports. They enjoyed part of the nonsense on stage and off stage headed by Denise Darcel and Marty May. But they missed Ole Olsen who is out of show ill. Times critic suggested professional direction and editing would help very much. Watts, Post, reported that critics Chapman and Atkinson were victims of audience jokes. The remainder of the critics just aren't O & J fans. Many objected that Miss Darcel didn't have enough material. The critics were surprised and pleasant that the whole show is in a milder tone. While McClain, subbing for Garland, Journal American, was entranced by the attractive female bass fiddler.

Season in the Sun-Cort, 9/28/50. The unpredictable critics praised first play by New Yorker critic to the hilt. Only two daily reviewers filed "con" votes, with one "so-so". Chapman, News, billed the comedy starring Richard Whorf and Nancy Kelly as the funniest of the season, and the best since Born Yesterday. Cast and direction of Burgess Meredith was lauded highly. Some did find fault with weak plot structure charging that it was composed of series of vaudeville sketches. Watts, Post, and Pollock, Compass, were of this opinion. While Sheaffer, Eagle, and Dash, Women's Wear Daily, were the dissenters. They hope their colleague writes a full fledged play next time. Several voiced thought that even critic Gibbs would have been disappointed with the serious moments of author Gibbs' play.

Weekly Critics View the Shows--additional digests on back page

Affairs of State-Royale, 9/27/50. Trade Paper critics were pleased with Louis Verneuil's first play in English. They found it pleasantly diverting comedy, well cast and directed. Celeste Holm and Reginald Owen shared honors. Lardner, New Yorker, and Marshall, Nation, thought cast overcame immense odds in providing entertaining evening. But critics of news-weekly magazines, Christian Science Monitor and George Jean Nathan panned it as a dull vehicle. Latter also took opportunity to defend stand of critic. It is function of critic to tell his own views, not to fathom out the unpredictable views of the public. When the public doesn't agree with a critic over a long period then it is time for the reviewer to retire or to ask for a wage cut.

Southern Exposure-Biltmore, 9/26/50. Weekly critics agreed with their colleagues who suggested the Owen Crump folk tale of Natchez should have stood in Dallas. Chapman, News, remains as the sole critic who enjoyed the show. Newsweek critic called it "Parochial Plotpourri". Critics praised Pat Crowley, Mary Finney and Betty Greene Little for being funny in spite of the dull script.

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' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '
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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Newark News | 21. Catholic World |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Women's Wear Daily | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Daily Worker | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (PM, Star) | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat. Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post | 16. George Jean Nathan | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse) | 17. Morning Telegraph | 27. Time |
| 8. NY Journal American | 18. Variety | 28. Nation |
| 9. NY World-Telegram & Sun | 19. Billboard | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Theatre Arts | 30. New Yorker |

Affairs of State-Royale, 9/25/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-8-9-15-18-19-29. Con: 1-6-7-10-11-12-14-16-24-26-27. None: 13-17-20-21-22-23-25-29-30.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 1-9-13-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 27 votes. Con: 22. So-So: 6-29.

Daphne-Laureola-Music Box, 9/18/50. Pro: 3-5-8-10-11-12-14-15-18-19-24-26-28-29. Con: 1-4-6-7-9-16-27-30. So-So: 2. None: 13-17-20-21-22-23-25.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28. So-So: 16-19-22-23-27.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.

Kiss Me, Kate-Shubert, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-22-30

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Peep Show-Winter Garden, 6/28/50. Pro: 4-5-6-7-8-10-11-15-17-19-23. Con: 1-2-12-16-20-26-27-28-29-30. So-So: 3-14-18. None: 9-13-21-22-24-25.

Peter Pan-St. James, 4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-13-16-30. So-So: 6-14-19.

Season in the Sun-Cort, 9/28/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9. Con: 10-12.

Southern Exposure-Biltmore, 9/26/50. Pro: 3. Con: 1-2-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-18-19-23-26-27-30.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Tickets Please-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 11-16-27-30. So-So: 26.

Black Chiffon-48th Street Theatre, 9/27/50. Pro: 1-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-15-17-18-19-23-26-28-30. Con: 2-3-27.

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' Random Items '
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Perle Mesta will or will not attend opening of Call Me Madam depending upon which columnist you believe...Tallulah Bankhead will M.C. an all-star variety radio show Sundays over NBC...Mae West is being auditioned for a late evening disc jockey show on WOR...Martin Starr will return to WINS with comments on theatre...Helen Hayes has been elected president of ANTA...Libretto for The Consul is sold only with Decca Album.

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' Green Room Department '
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MORGAN DEFINES CRITIC...A theatre critic, writes Henry Morgan in his new Post week end column, is a man who would like to write a play but can't because he can't tell a good play from a bad one. One critic is a guy who doesn't like any play unless it has a neurotic woman in it who would like a guy like him. One of them hates everything unless Bobby Clark is in it. (He has a point, though.)

WHAT'S WHAT...Even the cast members of The Cocktail Party aren't sure what the T.S. Eliot play is all about. Morehouse, WT&S, discovered that one actress was slightly confused, but O'Conner, Journal American, found that the entire cast could stand a lecture from the author as to the meaning of his script.

ADD THEATRE SOLUTION...If television can't do better than the NBC Musical Comedy Theatre production of Anything Goes, people will start going to the theatre, comments Gould, Times.

FIRST PLAY PATIENCE...Audiences and critics must be indulgent when judging the first plays of new playwrights urges Burr, Playbill. The best of the dramatists have had trouble with their early efforts. Watch for the gleams of genius in the coming crop and hail them.

THE PARASITES...Managers and police should put a halt to the excessive number of street merchants who set up shop outside theatre lobbies during intermissions, suggests Show Business editorial. The practice, which is annoying and embarrassing to the already over harassed theatre goer, could be stopped in one night if the theatre groups protested to the police commissioner.

INVITATION TO BLACKLIST...Chapman, News, penned an open letter to the editors of Counterattack asking that they include his name in the new edition of "Red Channels". As evidence of his subversiveness he detailed that he was president of the Drama Critics Circle, and that he knows Garson Kanin and John Garfield well enough to call them by their nicknames.

LEAGUE PRESIDENT "PRO"...Arthur Schwartz, who will probably succeed the late Brock Pemberton as president of the League of N.Y.Theatres, received a salute from Theatre News Weekly editorial.

CLUB TURNABOUT...Show of the Month Club charges Broadway Ticket Club, group sponsored by New York Ticket Brokers, with obtaining a "buy" on Black Chiffon. Ticket brokers have complained to League of N.Y.Theatres of "buying" activity by the Show of the Month Club. Decision on latter is expected in a few weeks.

COWARD'S COMPLAINT...Watts, Post, can't take Noel Coward's complaint seriously. Author told Drama Desk that American playwrights turn out too many "message" plays. The critic noted that Coward himself turned out his share of plays of this type. Watts voices hope that theatre will always have the gay and grave, for it is the well rounded theatre that will survive.

YOUNG HOPEFULS...TV is paying board for current crop of young theatre hopefuls in N.Y., Carol Taylor, WT&S, discovered. Six girls interviewed admitted they still hoped to get into the theatre.

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' Checking the Ads '
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Season in the Sun display ad is filled with accurate quotes from Wolcott Gibbs' colleagues...Daphne Laureola, which received the penning of critics as play, ran ad quoting famous actress' opinion of Edith Evans. Quotes included Helen Hayes, Katharine Hepburn, Ruth Gordon and Lynn Fontanne...Black Chiffon display ad wisely left out quotes from Chapman, News.

' Interview Round Up '

SHEPARD TRAUBE...The Gioconda Smile producer doesn't feel that film rights play too much of a part in picking plays, he confided to Rice, Post. The producer gets less than ten per cent of the film sale. Traube, who did right well with the film rights of Angel Street, finds that having paid previews in New York City instead of an out of town tryout tour saves wear and tear on producer, cast and staff.

CLIFFORD CDETS...Director-author of The Country Girl expressed disappointment to Pollock, Compass, on the critical reaction to The Big Knife, his play of two seasons ago. He still thinks that Hollywood degrades the American people. The title of his present play may be changed to Theatre Piece before opening night, but he has the titles for his next three plays already in mind.

TALLULAH BANKHEAD...Morehouse, WT&S, visited actress in her hilltop home near Bedford Village, N.Y. She is busy choosing a play to appear in. Her choices include scripts by Edwin Justus Mayer, Louis Kronenberger, and a new version of Hedda Gabler. Her present philosophy was summed up with the line "No, darling, I don't want to go on the stage. But I've got to. What else would I do?"

MR. & MRS. JOHN McMILLIN...WT&S helped Navy veteran couple from Guam see South Pacific after four years and 40,000 miles worth of fruitless trying. Couple had tried to see hit show each time they came to New York on business. In desperation they wrote to the newspaper for help. A well placed phone call got them the desired tickets.

PAT CROWLEY...Teen age star of Southern Exposure just loves the N.Y. critics for their rave notices of her, she told MBS. Sardis. Pat is the sister of Ann Crowley who had the lead in Carousel. The younger Crowley played a walk-on in that hit at the age of 12.

ARTHUR KLEIN...Tickets Please producer doesn't miss a thing that goes on at the Coronet Theatre, Pollock, Compass, learned. He arrives every morning at 9:00 A.M. and remains to see each evening's performance.

HY GARDNER..."Early Bird on Broadway" columnist of Herald Tribune isn't at all surprised that the conservative morning newspaper has a Broadway column. Answering a leading question thrown at him by WCB's Margaret Arlen he pointed out that while the paper is conservative it is also progressive. At a time when so much serious news is in the rest of the paper, it is important to lighten it up with entertaining features. A Broadway column can fill the bill if it keeps away from politics.

' Weekly Critics on British Play '

Black Chiffon-48th Street Theatre, 9/27/50. Lesley Storm's psychological melodrama was saved by Flora Robson's fine acting agreed the weekly critics. Though Time critic didn't feel that the play had enough interesting moments. Lardner, New Yorker, didn't like Anthony Ireland, but the rest of the reviewers praised the cast as perfect, the direction of Charles Hickman perfect. Hobe, Variety, noted that there was an excess of coughing in the audience at the start of the acts. This may be due to the small lobby which allows the tobacco smoke to filter into the theatre.

' News & Notes '

Broadway business up for third week in row...The Gioconda Smile opening delayed six days due to injury of Basil Rathbone's foot...Robert Garland, Journal American, due to return to editorial chores this week.

